



Mahoning Valley

ORGANIZING COLLABORATIVE



2 0 0 8 - 2 0 0 9 A n n u a l R e p o r t

Dear Friends,

This past year was defined by tremendous challenges for our communities as we experienced a declining economy, a housing crisis, job loss, and the continuation of a long pattern of disinvestment in urban neighborhoods in Mahoning Valley. Yet, 2008 was also a year that brought hope. Hope that we can imagine a new Mahoning Valley, beyond its past and into a new future. Hope that our neighborhoods can become places of choice. Hope that we will weather the storm once again to emerge with innovative ideas and a new beginning.

This past year was a fitting year for the launch of the Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative, a broad based community organizing effort founded on a simple belief that ordinary people themselves hold the solutions to the problems we face.

This organization is collectively owned and directed by all of us – through organizing people and money effectively to carry out issue campaigns, research, training, and to hire and employ professional organizers to work in our neighborhoods and with our organizations.

In just one year, MVOC has grown to work with over 60 grassroots groups including; churches, neighborhood associations, block clubs, youth organizations, and labor unions in Mahoning and Trumbull Counties to address issues such as vacant properties, health care, problem corner stores, funding for neighborhood stabilization efforts, and landlord accountability.

We have a monumental task ahead, but we believe in this Valley and that together we can bring about the kind of change that has been long overdue. It is our hope after reading this annual report that you will be inspired to get involved with one of the many organizations we work with and to join us in the task ahead.

Sincerely,

Pastor Michael Harrison

Senior Pastor, Union Baptist Church

*Chairman of the Sponsoring Committee
President, Ohio Baptist State Convention*



Kirk Noden

Executive Director

The Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative



Mission: *To identify and develop leaders, to organize neighborhoods, and to build capacity to achieve healthy communities.*

Our Goals Are:

To Organize

Individuals, organizations, and neighborhoods working on quality of life issues in the Valley into a supportive and united entity that can deliver people and get things done;

To Train

Individuals and organizations to identify the needs of the community and to hold public institutions accountable for meeting those needs;

To Provide Resources

Through technical assistance and support and to assist local organizations in developing membership, raising funds, and identifying issues and problems which block the attainment of a healthy, vibrant community;

To Link Neighborhoods

To larger community initiatives; regional, state and national for the betterment of the Valley;

To Give Hope

To individuals and local grassroots organizations working to create healthy, sustainable neighborhoods; and enhance their community together;

To Encourage

Individuals and neighborhoods affected by a problem to create a campaign to address the issue.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Message from Chairman & Executive Director	ii
Mission/ Table of Contents	iii
MVOC: Who We Are	4
MVOC: Building Social Capacity	5
MVOC: Issues and Action	6 - 9
MVOC: Financials & Sponsoring Committee Members	10
MVOC: Our Partners	11

MVOC Locations

Youngstown Office

22 West Wood Street, 2nd Floor
Youngstown, Ohio 44503
Ph: 330-743-1196
Fax: 330-743-132 2

Warren Office

108 Main Avenue S.W., Suite 1005
Warren, Ohio 44481
Ph: 330-394-3801
Fax: 330-394-5601

Warren Office

ACOP Center
2051 Niles Road S.E.
Warren, Ohio 44484
Ph: 330-369-1441
Fax: 330-369-1467

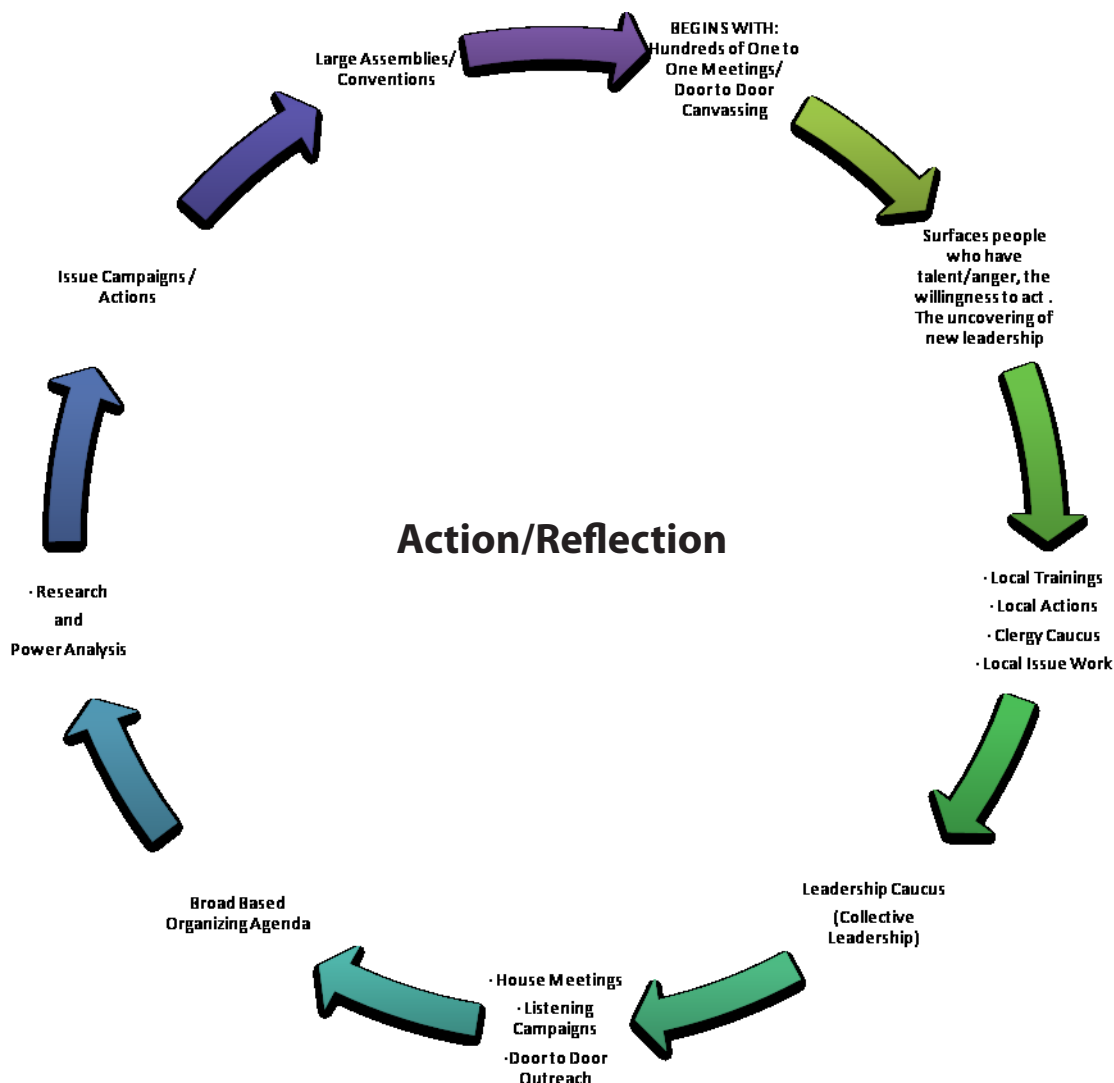
Who We Are...

"We will let them know Youngstown has been the orphan child and we're no longer willing to put up with that,"

Esq. Patricia Dougan,
President of 7th Ward Citizens Coalition

M**VOC** is a broad-based community organizing effort that seeks to reweave the fabric of communities in Mahoning, Trumbull, and Columbiana Counties. MVOC uses a model of broad-based organizing that blends both institutional (a membership base of churches, schools, neighborhood associations, unions, etc.) with direct door to door grassroots organizing. Currently MVOC works with more than 60 grassroots organizations including: churches, neighborhood associations, block clubs, parent associations, unions and other non-profits.

MVOC's current work includes organizing campaigns around local issues, conducting grassroots leadership training, carrying out urban policy and research, increasing civic participation, and connecting our area to larger regional/statewide issues. Below is a summary of MVOC's organizing methodology. ■



MVOC Builds Social Capacity

By training and developing leadership, teaching strategies to build or rebuild networks of relationships, and assisting community institutions to look outward and use creative strategies for community engagement.

By connecting a broad range of grassroots groups to collaborate, share resources, and examine problems with a comprehensive approach. Our analysis is that there is often very good work going on in communities, but it is usually fragmented and happening in isolation.

By organizing groups to have a collective voice in the decision making process to tackle social justice issues such as reducing concentrated poverty, improving the quality of life in Mahoning Valley, and addressing systemic issues of equity. ■



"This is a group we've needed for a long time. They couldn't have formed at a more critical time," says

**Youngstown Mayor Jay Williams
of the MVOC.**

MVOC Accomplishments 2008/2009

- ✓ **MVOC developed** and implemented a Corner Store Clean-up campaign to address the longstanding problem of five local corner stores on the Southside of Youngstown that were havens for underage drinking, drugs, crime, prostitution, and a lower quality of life. More than 300 people were involved in the campaign that led to the clean-up of the stores and a successful dry precinct vote.
- ✓ **MVOC held** a series of community meetings in Warren to address the issue of poorly maintained rental property. The campaign culminated in a two hundred and fifty person public meeting led by clergy and neighborhood leaders that led a policy change in March increasing the city's rental fees in order to hire additional inspectors with the goal of inspecting the city's 6,000 rental units annually.
- ✓ **MVOC launched** a comprehensive Vacant Properties Organizing Campaign to address the most critical issue facing urban neighborhoods in the Valley. MVOC has convened area legislators including the Mayor, Congressman, County Commissioner, State Senator and State Representative, city council members and others to work together with religious and community leaders to fight for additional resources from the state for the Valley. MVOC hosted the Lt. Governor with 1,000 attendees to discuss these issues at length on February 17, 2009.
- ✓ **MVOC led** innovative policy work including a vacant properties survey that involved over 150 community leaders surveying every single parcel of land in Youngstown rating abandoned structures and lots. The survey is now being replicated in Warren. Additionally, MVOC has developed a strategic demolition policy to further enhance our cities' approach to demolition.
- ✓ **MVOC played** a key role in building community support for the creation of Community College in Mahoning Valley. MVOC worked with Lorain Community College staff to circulate surveys, hold public meetings, and rally churches and neighborhood groups to formally sign on to the proposal. In February 2009, the Valley was awarded a 1.9 million dollar federal grant for the creation of a community college. Mahoning Valley was previously the only major metropolitan area in the state not to have a community college.
- ✓ **MVOC is sponsoring** the creation of the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC), a CDC that is able to work comprehensively on a targeted citywide scale. The YNDC is being developed to provide the community with a high capacity and multifaceted organization staffed by experienced professionals. YNDC has received an initial commitment for more than a million dollars of funding from private and governmental sources.
- ✓ **MVOC led** a broad non-partisan Get Out the Vote Campaign in the fall of 2008. MVOC registered more than 500 voters, knocked on over 2,200 doors, and made 17,000 phone calls to encourage voters to support the local WRTA levy and put an end to predatory pay day lending in Ohio.
- ✓ **MVOC won** a landmark ten point agreement with the owner of more than 300 properties in Youngstown that includes the owner paying for the demolition and rehab of 34 properties, most of which are in need of immediate removal. More than 200 people from every side of Youngstown were involved in public meetings and negotiation sessions. ■

Issues & Action **Vacant Property Organizing Campaign**

*"The city's total percentage of vacant land is 36.4 % or 2.5 times the national average of 15.4 percent (Brookings).
The vacant structure per 1,000 residents ratio in Youngstown is 61.8 or 23 times the national average of (2.63)."*

Introduction

After several months of conducting a listening campaign in the Mahoning Valley, it became clear that vacant property is one of the greatest challenges facing urban neighborhoods within the region. Vacant property affects all aspects of life in urban and suburban neighborhoods and can be a breeding ground for criminal activity, pose a safety hazard to children, an impediment to redevelopment, create a physical desperation, and significantly decrease property values. Despite all these challenges vacant property also presents the community with significant opportunities to revitalize and rethink their neighborhoods. Given the depth and far reaching effects of vacant properties, the Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative began a region-wide organizing campaign in the fall of 2008 to begin systematically addressing the situation.

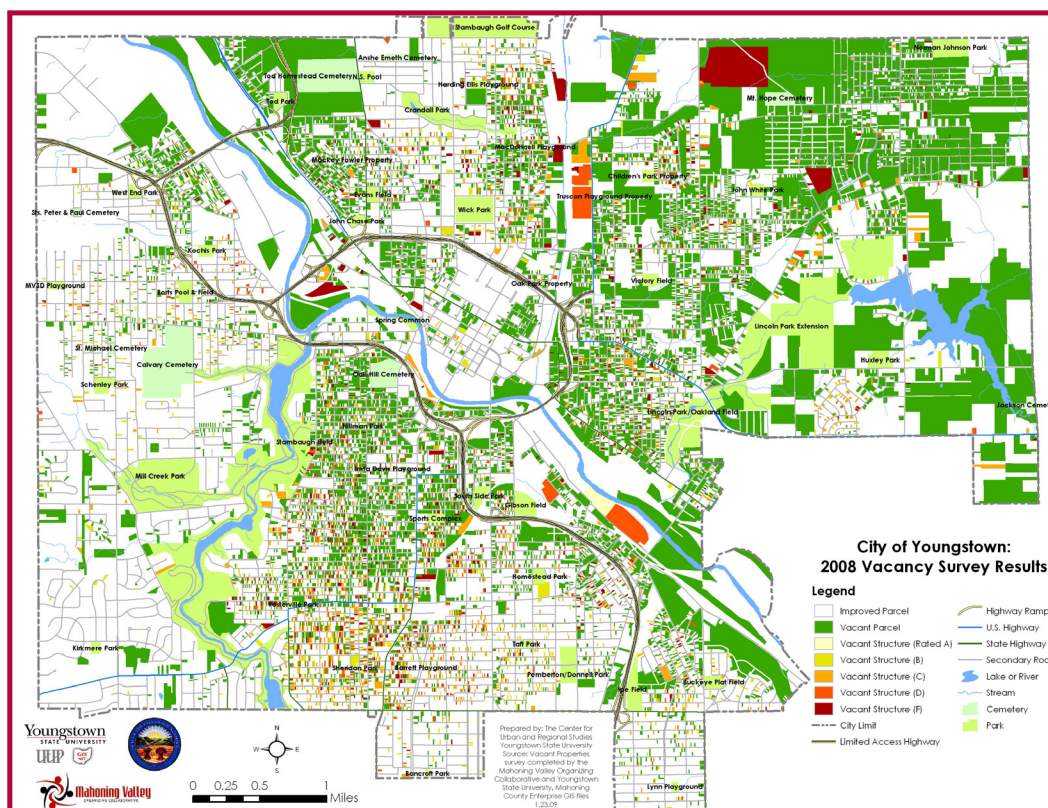
Background

The City of Youngstown is home to over 4,500 vacant structures and over 22,000 vacant lots, which creates one of the highest vacant property rates per capita in the United States. This translates into 43.7 percent of parcels within the City of Youngstown experiencing

vacancy in some form. The City of Warren is also facing a significant problem with 2,500 plus vacant structures and over 4,000 vacant lots. The oversupply of vacant properties reflects the decade's long population outflow and economic decline of the Mahoning Valley. While the Mahoning Valley problem is severe it is simply a stage

on the long road to renewal.

The current approach to addressing vacant properties in the Mahoning Valley is reactive, intermittent, fragmented, and a financial burden. A new approach must be comprehensive, strategic, ongoing, focused, collaborative, and provide a financial return to the region. ■



MVOC's Vacant Properties Organizing Campaign

Based on the listening campaign, MVOC leaders crafted a detailed and lengthy organizing strategy to address vacant properties. Currently, our work is focused on five components:

1. Citywide Vacant Property Survey
2. Strategic Demolition Policy
3. Landlord Accountability
4. Leveraging Resources to Address Vacant Property
5. Expansion of Community Development Capacity



Community Meeting with Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher, February 17, 2009 with 1,000 attendees.

Conducting a Citywide Vacant Property Survey

In January 2009, the Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative completed the

Citywide Vacant Property Survey. Over 150 community and neighborhood leaders were involved in this 3-month participatory research process. Participants surveyed every parcel within the City of Youngstown (over 62,000 parcels) and identified vacant lots and structures using a uniform and consistent methodology.

The Citywide Vacant Property Survey determined that 43.7 percent of the parcels within the City of Youngstown experience some form of vacancy. The survey identified 4,564 vacant structures and 22,792 vacant lots within the city. Each of the 4,564

continued on page 11

Holding Problem Landlords Accountable

With a staggering number of foreclosures and vacant properties, urban neighborhoods are seeing a rapid increase in rental property. In Warren, MVOC helped to organize local church leaders and neighborhood groups to change the city policy with the goal of having every rental property inspected at least once in the calendar year. The city increased rental fees in March of 2008 to be able to address the now more than 6,000 rental units in the city.

In Youngstown, community leaders spent

several weeks researching the major property owners within the city and identifying landlords with the largest holdings of nuisance and slum properties. After several weeks community leaders identified one of these landlords and a community meeting was

held to discuss the issues with him. A few weeks after the meeting, the owner who has more than 300 properties signed a ten point community agreement consenting to pay for the demolition and rehab of 34 properties, most of which are in need of immediate removal. The campaign is on-

"The Garden Distric Block Watch would like to stop this cancer before it spreads" said...

Denise McGuire, Olson Block Watch Captain



Problem Landlord Community Meeting at OCCHA, November 20, 2008.

going and monthly meetings are held to follow up on progress toward meeting the goals of the commitment. Other landlords will be identified to work with community leaders based on the condition of their properties. ■

Leveraging Significant Resources to Address Neighborhood Conditions

One of the primary functions of the Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative is to aggressively advocate for sufficient resources needed to address issues of blight and poverty that continue to expand in Mahoning Valley.

In December 2008, MVOC led a delegation of community officials and leaders from all levels of government and sectors of the community to meet with Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher and Ohio Department of Development officials. This historic event included everyone from the Mayor of Youngstown, county commissioners, neighborhood

"With the high foreclosure rate and a growing number of vacant properties, it's important that residents are aware of how these issues are affecting our community," said...

Pastor Gerald Morgan of Hoyt Street Flourishing Ministries.

leaders, the state senator and faith based leaders resulted in two important commitments. One, the state committed to finding funding to begin to address the neighborhood stabilization needs of the City of Youngstown. Two, the Lt. Governor committed to coming to the Valley and meeting with the MVOC, community officials, leaders and residents.

In addition to this, MVOC is working with Congressman Tim Ryan to educate leaders about a federal initiative, *the Community Regeneration, Sustainability and Innovation Act of 2009*, that would provide serious resources



Neighborhood Stabilization Press Conference at a Southside Vacant Property.

to weak market cities facing issues like Youngstown. The MVOC will continue to aggressively pursue resources and work with community leaders to pursue resources from the philanthropic and business community to address vacant property. ■

Expanding Community Development Capacity

The Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC) is being developed to undertake strategic neighborhood development and revitalization activities in targeted areas throughout the city. Historically, Youngstown has had limited community development capacity and currently there is no functioning Community Development Corporation (CDC) that is able to work comprehensively on a targeted city-wide scale. The YNDC is being developed

to fill the existing void and to provide the community with a high capacity and multifaceted organization staffed by talented and experienced professionals capable of achieving the needed results.

The YNDC will utilize a broad palette of programs, focused on neighborhood recovery from housing rehab, homebuyer assistance, home maintenance assistance, vacant lot management and greening,

neighborhood marketing and engagement, to begin the process of neighborhood stabilization and recovery.

The Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation is intended to be a "sister project" to the Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative. The two organizations will work together to rebuild the social and physical fabric of neighborhoods across the City of Youngstown. ■

Issues & Action *(continued)*

Voter Engagement

The Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative (MVOC) in Collaboration with the Ohio Baptist State Convention (OBSC), The AMOS Project, and the Northeast Ohio Alliance for Hope has run extensive Get Out the Vote programs in the last three election cycles. In the summer and fall of 2008, the MVOC and its partners developed one of the largest nonpartisan GOTV efforts in the state of Ohio focusing their work in six cities Cincinnati, Canton, Youngstown, Warren, and Cleveland and Toledo. In total, more than seventy paid staff and one hundred and fifty volunteers made more than 37,078 voter contacts including knocking on 5,908 doors, signing up 8,531 voters at local churches, and making 59,419 phone calls in the 72 hours before the election.



Get Out the Vote Rally at Union Baptist Church.

MVOC also helped to support the WTRA transportation levy campaign in Mahoning County making more than 17,000 calls to persuade voters to vote yes. The levy, which failed by more than 10 points in the spring would shift the financing of the regional transportation system from

Youngstown city residents' property taxes to a county wide sales tax. The levy passed this fall (2008) by more than 10 points – a 20 point swing.

MVOC sees electoral politics as a key piece of a long term strategy for social change. We subscribe to Wellstone Action's basic model as Jeff Blodgett describes, "We subscribe to a model of successful social change that has three fronts—community organizing, electoral politics, and progressive public policy. All three components are necessary for lasting political change to happen. The process of campaigning, of running for elected office, is but one side of that triangle, but it is crucial."

MVOC is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that operates as a 501c3. ■

Health Care

MVOC supports the principles of the national Health Care for America Campaign (H-CAN). Congressmen Tim Ryan, Charlie Wilson, and John Bocchieri have all formally signed pledges in support of the Health Care for America Now Campaign. We are engaged in health care reform because it is not only a social justice issue (for those who have no coverage); but it is an economic issue putting undo pressure on local businesses and corporations that are vital to the Valley's economy. Health care reform is fundamental to job creation and more sustainable neighborhoods.

MVOC's get out the vote canvassing efforts signed up more than **2,000** health care reform voters. We believe that all of us benefit from healthy communities, where we all have access to affordable, quality health care from a provider of our choice, at the time we need it, at a cost we can afford. Our mutual goal is affordable, quality health care for everyone in America and for our nation. ■



Leaders from across the state of Ohio leave the headquarters of Anthem Health Insurance in Cincinnati.

Community Labor Partnerships

Fundamental to stable neighborhoods are living wage jobs and economic opportunities for residents in the Valley. MVOC sees community labor partnerships as a key piece of its work. In September 2008, SEIU 1199 and MVOC held a joint public meeting with new Forum Health CEO Walter Pishkur to discuss the future of Forum Health, a fair contract for the 1,100 members at the hospital system, and for additional community representation on the Forum Board. A new contract has been reached and MVOC is in ongoing conversations with new CEO Walter Pishkur.

On a statewide level, we joined leaders from UFCW 1059 on a visit of 250 people to Cincinnati Processing's corporate headquarters to drop off 2,500 postcards and demand they negotiate to improve working conditions for workers. The same day we dropped by the president of Cincinnati state with SEIU Local 3 to discuss his failure to provide janitors health care benefits. ■



Northside residents meet with Forum Health CEO - Walter Pishkur, SEIU 1199, public officials & community leaders to stress the importance of Forum Health in the community.

Issues & Action

Neighborhood Issue Organizing

The MVOC works with neighborhood groups and institutions to develop local issue campaigns to address challenges facing our neighborhoods. Local issue campaigns are driven by the concerns of the community and may range from drug houses, lack of youth programming, park conditions or problem corner stores. Currently, the MVOC is conducting a Corner Store Campaign to address the condition and effects of the stores on neighborhoods. ■

Corner Store Campaign

The Idora Neighborhood is located on the southwest side of Youngstown and has seen serious disinvestment over the past thirty years and is now almost devoid of commercial activity. This area of the city is a food desert (no full service grocery stores) and has an overabundance of corner convenience stores. In March 2008, the Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative began working with the group (Idora Neighborhood Association) to increase the capacity and membership of the organization. Today, the Idora Neighborhood Association (INA) is one of Youngstown's premier civic groups with a growing membership

of more than 225 residents on the city's southwest side.

In the summer of 2008, the organization, working with the MVOC, decided to take on the issue of cleaning up five problem corner convenience stores along a one mile stretch of Glenwood Avenue. The corner stores have long been a haven

for criminal activity, loitering, prostitution, sale of alcohol and tobacco to minors and even shootings.

After a series of two community meetings with more than 150 people at each meeting, a signature drive to put dry pre-

"James London, Idora Neighborhood Association President, summed it up well by saying "it is easier to buy crack than a fresh tomato on the southwest side."



cinct initiatives on the ballot, and building relationships with key city departments to inspect the properties, MVOC has successfully cleaned up the majority of corner stores and continues to follow through on the issues raised. The Corner Store Campaign will continue throughout 2009 and be utilized in other neighborhoods throughout the city to ensure the corner stores become good neighbors. ■

Neighborhood SUCCESS Grants

MVOC works to support grassroots groups to apply for Neighborhood Success Grants (grants ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 for community projects). These grants can serve as a catalyst for neighborhood revitalization, leadership development, and increased community cohesion. Do you have an idea for a project for your neighborhood? A community garden? A community sewing class at your church? A youth program? An art program? MVOC's development staff will help you brainstorm and assist you in writing a grant. ■



2008 FINANCIALS

Statement of Financial Position

Jan - Dec 08

Ordinary Income/Expense

Income

Foundation Income	497,949.85
Direct Public Support	600.00
Investments	345.31
Total Income	498,895.16

Expense

Contract Services	23,331.50
Dues & Subscriptions	1,857.60
Insurance	25,969.38
Leadership Training	20,495.52
Legal Fees and Filings	989.24
Meeting Expense	7,730.35
Office Expense	25,908.94
Promotion	7,930.00
Payroll Expenses	231,294.20
Postage and Delivery	4,666.74
Printing and Copying	2,688.68
Rent	11,419.33
Staff Recruitment	2,867.01
Staff Training and Development	8,773.36
Telephone, Telecommunications	5,148.58
Travel	17,414.21
Utilities	1,322.46
Total Expense	399,807.10

Year End Balance

98,809.75



MVOC's Sponsoring Committee

Pastor Michael Harrison (Chairman)
Senior Pastor, Union Baptist Church

William "Bill" Mullane
(Vice Chairman)
Education Leader

Ron Chordis
Director
Center for Urban & Regional Studies
Youngstown State University

Jimmy Pugh, Executive
Director, Project Gridiron

Joyce Davidson
President
Know Your Neighbor Block Watch

Esq. Patricia Dougan
President, 7th Ward Citizens Coalition

Warren Harrell
President, Northeast Homeowners and
Concerned Citizens

Charlene Allen
Executive Director, ACOP Center

MVOC STAFF

Kirk Noden..... Executive Director

Ian Beniston..... Director of Policy

Phil Kidd Community
Organizer

Damareo Cooper..... Community
Organizer

Tammy Thomas..... Community
Organizer

Joy Serednesky..... Business
Manager

MVOC Vacant Properties

continued from page 6

vacant structures was assigned a rating based on condition.

The findings of the Citywide Vacant Property Survey are compelling when compared to national data and statistics. The city's total percentage of vacant land is 36.4 percent or two and a half times the national average of 15.4 percent (Brookings). Even more compelling is the ratio of vacant structures per 1,000 residents, which is another indicator, used to measure the extent of the problem. The vacant structure per 1,000 residents ratio in Youngstown is 61.8 or 23 times the national average of (2.63). The results of the vacant property survey provide a baseline in making informed decisions for future policy and development decisions. This data also creates the foundation for a more strategic

approach to demolition within the City of Youngstown. The Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative is also working to carry out a Citywide Vacant Property Survey in the City of Warren to be completed in early Spring 2009.

Developing a Strategic Demolition Policy

The current approach to demolition places condemned structures on a numbered list with no formal mechanism for prioritization. This approach results in a scattershot method of demolition that has proved ineffective in stabilizing neighborhoods as illustrated by the Citywide Vacant Property Survey data. During the Youngstown 2010 planning process the idea of a more strategic approach to demolition was developed, but never formalized.

The city can sink millions of dollars in demolition, but if it is not done in the context of stabilizing neighborhoods and right sizing the positive impact will be minimal and the city will continue to decline.

MVOC has set forth a strategic demolition plan built on the Youngstown 2010 approach. The strategic approach does not need to begin as an overly sophisticated system, but rather a simple approach that can evolve over time as it proves successful. Our draft policy document is on our website at www.mvorganizing.org ■

MVOC's STATEWIDE PARTNERS

The Ohio Organizing Collaborative

MVOC is a founding member of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative, a long-term organizing effort that knits together strategic constituencies at the neighborhood, union and congregational levels to build sustainable power in Ohio. The goal of this effort is to ultimately build a broad and deep enough base to exercise governance power committed to the interests of low-income and working class people. Collectively, the organizations have an organized based in every major metropolitan area in Ohio, 65 full time professional community organizers, and a membership base of neighborhood residents, congregational members, and union members of more than 150,000 people in Ohio.



Empowering & Strengthening Ohio's People



UNITY—FAITH—DIVERSITY—POWER



Northeast Ohio Alliance for Hope



Catholics in Alliance FOR THE COMMON GOOD

VISION:

*The Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative
is dedicated to improving the quality of life in
the Youngstown and Warren Region through the
creation and support of healthy neighborhoods.*



Mahoning Valley
ORGANIZING COLLABORATIVE

Youngstown Office

22 West Wood Street
2nd Floor
Youngstown, Ohio 44503
Phone: 330.743.1196
Fax: 330.743.1322

Warren Office

108 Main Avenue S.W.
Suite 1005
Warren, Ohio 44481
Phone: 330.394.3801
Fax: 330.394.5601

Warren Office

ACOP Center
2051 Niles Road S.E.
Warren, Ohio 44484
Phone: 330.369.1441
Fax: 330.369.1467

email: info@mvorganizing.org
www.mvorganizing.org

Identifying and Developing Leaders • Organizing Neighborhoods • Building Capacity to Achieve Healthy Communities